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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 14 July 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. GALUŠKA (Czech Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS (agenda item 6) (A/51/636-E/1996/104, A/51/655-E/1996/105, A/52/114-E/1997/46, A/52/115-E/1997/47):

(b) MULTISECTORAL COLLABORATION ON TOBACCO OR HEALTH (A/52/114-E/1997/46, E/1997/62);

(d) COORDINATION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN THE FIELD OF ENERGY (A/52/175-E/1997/75);

(e) JOINT AND CO-SPONSORED UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS/ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY DISEASE SYNDROME (E/1997/63);

(i) PROCLAMATION OF INTERNATIONAL YEARS (E/1997/3, 11, 12, 93, 99).

The PRESIDENT invited the Economic and Social Council to begin its general segment, starting with the consideration of agenda item 6 entitled "Coordination, programme and other questions".

Mr. MEZZALAMA (Vice-Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit), introducing the report entitled "Review of financial resources allocated by the United Nations system to activities by non-governmental organizations" (A/51/655-E/1996/105), said that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were an essential component of United Nations activities, both in economic and social development and in humanitarian assistance. That fact had led to the Council's recognition of the growing importance of regional, subregional and national NGOs and the need to broaden the role of the Committee on Non-governmental Organizations and to adopt standard rules for the participation of NGOs in the preparation and work of the international conferences convened by the United Nations. The report before the Council, which recognized that accountability in respect of the funds provided was an intrinsic prerequisite in technical and humanitarian cooperation programmes and projects, recommended that special financial accounting and reporting methods should be introduced for NGOs and that a database should be set up and maintained on their activities, that a separate budget line should be established for NGO activities, that a better administrative structure should be given to their relationship with the organizations of the United Nations system and that clear policy guidelines should be prepared for cooperation between them. He underlined the importance of the involvement of national NGOs in the activities of the United Nations system and suggested an increase

in the partnership role with organizations of the system and financial support and training in the different areas, including management, for national NGOs.

Mr. KUYAMA (Joint Inspection Unit), introducing the JIU report entitled "Coordination of policy and programme frameworks for more effective development cooperation" (A/51/636-E/1996/104), said that one way of achieving optimal efficiency, reduced overhead costs and an increased net flow of resources to recipient countries was to integrate as much as possible the numerous policy and programme frameworks used by international development partners to formulate, implement and evaluate their development assistance, in particular at the country level. The Joint Inspection Unit recommended the strengthening of the responsibilities of the Governments of recipient countries for the coordination and management of external development inputs and the maximum integration of development cooperation strategies and mechanisms.

In its comments on the JIU report (A/52/115-E/1997/47), the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) appeared to contradict the Secretary-General's call for a common development cooperation framework, which need not necessarily be the Country Strategy Note. Contrary to the restrictive definition ACC gave to that mechanism, Governments should feel free to use it as they deemed best to bring about maximum integration of external development inputs irrespective of their source. In any event, the ACC comments should be read in the light of the Secretary-General's reform package and intergovernmental directives aimed at fostering maximum coherence and integration within the multilateral development system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and bilateral donor community. He was pleased to inform the meeting that the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its last session had endorsed all the JIU recommendations. He therefore hoped that the Council would take definitive action on the recommendations instead of just taking note as had often been the case in the past.

Mr. URANGA (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), introducing the Secretary-General's report entitled "Progress made in the implementation of multisectoral collaboration on tobacco or health" (E/1997/62), said that there were currently 1 billion smokers in the world. Tobacco caused over 3 million deaths a year and the number was constantly on the increase, especially in developing countries and countries in transition.

Smoking control was a mammoth task since it targeted a perfectly legal drug, the production and marketing of which were extremely profitable. It thus came up against two serious obstacles, the ignorance of the population, against which the best weapon would be mass education, and the economic and financial power of the major transnationals, which were able to invest enormous sums in the production, distribution and promotion of tobacco products. Moreover, apart from ministries of health and sometimes of education, national authorities paid little attention to public health problems, and thus to addiction to smoking, so that there were no efficient policies to fight the scourge. It was therefore clear how much effort would be needed in the years to come to make all the world's populations recognize the severity of the problem.

Some progress had, however, been made. Joint action by Governments and NGOs had brought the major United States producers to an open admission that tobacco was addictive and that they resorted to aggressive advertising to encourage its use. In Geneva on 30 May, on the occasion of World No-Tobacco Day, the Secretary-General had announced his aim that all United Nations buildings should be declared smoke-free by the end of 1997 and had requested the support of the United Nation Focal Point on Tobacco or Health. A programme to achieve that objective had been initiated in collaboration with WHO.

Mrs. WALLER-HUNTER (Commission on Sustainable Development), introducing the Secretary-General's report entitled "Possibilities of strengthening the coordination of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations in the field of energy within the framework of the Administrative Committee on Coordination" (A/52/175-E/1997/75), said that, at its nineteenth special session, the General Assembly had stressed that energy played a vital role in sustainable development and therefore deserved high priority; it had also decided that the Commission on Sustainable Development would discuss energy issues at its ninth session and that preparations for that session should be started at its seventh session and entrusted to an open-ended intergovernmental group of experts on energy and sustainable development; and it had affirmed the need for commitments for the transfer of

relevant technologies, including time-bound commitments, to developing countries and economies in transition. The activities of the United Nations system in the field of energy, while modest, had an important role to play as catalysts or models.

The wide range of activities and programmes undertaken by the respective entities within the United Nations underscored the relationship between energy and sustainable development. Increasing attention was being given to energy efficiency, conservation and pricing policies. Two important objectives were the production and dissemination of clean energy technologies and the improvement of access to energy services by the rural population. The merger of three United Nations departments in the economic and social fields also provided a good opportunity to bring together the Secretariat's analytical, normative and technical capacities. In his report, the Secretary-General suggested modalities for inter-agency coordination which should result in the development of a reference framework for energy-related activities within the whole system and allocated a distinct role to the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development.

Mr. KHAN (Division for Policy Coordination) said that, in its resolution 1996/47, the Economic and Social Council had called for the Secretary-General to play a greater advocacy role in raising global awareness of the serious threat posed by the HIV virus and AIDS and had asked for the Secretariat to be fully and effectively involved in combating those scourges. In response, the Secretary-General had addressed the issue of the fight against HIV and AIDS during his visits to affected countries and was following the issue on a systematic basis. It had been suggested that he should become President of the Programme Coordinating Board of UNAIDS. The Secretariat for its part had held consultations with the representatives of the Programme and had set up an interdepartmental working group to coordinate the aid to be given to the Programme nationally, especially with regard to information and the creation of public awareness. Directors of United Nations Information Centres were full members of the national Theme Groups established by UNAIDS at the country level. He pointed out that the Secretariat had achieved those new steps without additional resources.

Mr. PIOT (World Health Organization), speaking as Executive Director of UNAIDS, the United Nations Joint and Co-sponsored Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Disease Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), gave a brief description of the epidemiological situation in the world, the results of the Joint Programme and the problems that remained to be resolved.

The AIDS epidemic was far from being brought under control and although the death rate was falling in some of the wealthiest countries, it was gathering momentum worldwide. Sub-Saharan Africa was still the region most affected, but Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean were experiencing a serious worsening of the phenomenon. The social and economic impact could only increase, since, when AIDS was aggravated by poverty it had a considerable impact on productivity and labour and thus exacerbated the knock-on effect of poverty.

Where treatment was concerned, the progress achieved as a result of the new triple combination therapies was encouraging. However, it was a medical advance that was difficult to use and in particular was very expensive. He welcomed the fact that the fight against AIDS was materially better organized on the initiative of numerous Governments which were adopting comprehensive policies and programmes to confront the epidemic or were intensifying action already initiated and that the endeavours of the authorities were accompanied by increased public awareness. Available figures proved that infection rates were falling, for example, in Thailand and Uganda, especially among young people.

As far as the United Nations was concerned, he was pleased to note that more and more organizations in the system which were not official co-sponsors of the Programme were being mobilized. The six co-sponsors had included the fight against AIDS in their normal activities and some were allocating increasing amounts of core funds to it. At the global level, joint planning and cooperation mechanisms had already been established and the whole system could call on the Inter-Agency Advisory Group on AIDS. In particular, over 120 Theme Groups on HIV/AIDS had been established at the country level and were being monitored by the co-sponsoring bodies. In many countries,

the UNAIDS secretariat had provided specific support for national strategic planning, particularly in the form of pilot and demonstration projects. Regional action was also achieving increasing success.

From the viewpoint of the coordination of activities and the reform of the United Nations system overall, UNAIDS could be described as exemplary in terms of the active support it mobilized for the Theme Groups. On balance, the results were doubtless mixed, but there were some lessons to be learned from them: coordination needed a substantive agenda with a technical edge; it also required the participation of the State to guarantee effective action and the existence of resources; financial investment by co-sponsors was vital; turf issues remained important, hence the need for a strong commitment by the governing bodies of co-sponsors; corporate culture was a slow developer, hence the need to keep expectations realistic; the Resident Coordinator system was still not fully accepted in the field by a number of United Nations agency country representatives and adjustments to the system needed to be envisaged.

The remaining problems were of two types: with regard to the epidemic itself, the fight must be extended beyond the strictly medical sector, access to care must be expanded and the search for a vaccine must continue. With regard to the co-sponsored approach, which had to date been practically unknown in most countries, the ongoing reform of the United Nations system should strengthen the efficiency of UNAIDS, while the experience gained should contribute to the reform, particularly at the country level. Despite a clear mandate for UNAIDS and the fact that its secretariat was not a fund, some donors and even some co-sponsor representatives in the field still thought it was an aid programme. In the interests of the Programme's credibility, it needed resources so that it could at least play a catalytic role vis-à-vis countries and within the United Nations system.

Mr. AKAO (Japan), referring to agenda item 6 (i) on the proclamation of international years and, in particular, to the year 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers, said that the idea had come out of meetings organized in Japan in 1996 by the United Nations Volunteers Programme and the United Nations University and had been supported by several major international non-governmental organizations. It had been endorsed by 40 organizations which sent volunteers on missions abroad and which had also met in 1996 in Washington.

Volunteer service was part of every civilization and society and was more useful than ever at the present time. However, while the contribution of volunteers was substantial, much of their work went unrecognized because it was not remunerated and because it was spontaneous, informal and unstructured.

In 1995, when the Hanshin-Awaji region had been struck by an earthquake, and recently, during an oil pollution incident, volunteers from all over Japan had rushed to the stricken areas and had thus made the Japanese more aware of volunteer activities.

The Government of Japan believed that the proclamation of an International Year of Volunteers would give volunteers greater recognition and legitimacy and significantly expand the number of people willing to offer their services. The objectives of the International Year would be increased recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteer service. It would be organized locally and there should be no financial burden on Member States.

The promotion of the International Year of Volunteers would be entrusted to the United Nations Volunteers Programme, which would coordinate the preparations for the Year in close collaboration with Governments, the United Nations system and civil society.

Mr. SCHUMACHER (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the member States of the European Union and commenting on the report of the Executive Director of UNAIDS, said that the European Union attached particular importance to the Programme as one of its major contributors, both financially and in terms of expert services. The co-sponsoring bodies, however, needed to make a stronger commitment by including the question of AIDS in their operational activities at the local, regional and international levels. A more energetic commitment was also needed on the part of the secretariat of the Programme and the co-sponsoring bodies within the Committee of Co-sponsoring Organizations and the inter-agency working groups. Coordination in the field should also be improved with a view to benefiting the Theme Groups.

The continued development of the epidemic and its explosion in Africa and Asia was alarming, although preventive activities had inhibited the spread of the virus in several developing countries. As the Executive Director had rightly stressed, it was increasingly clear that the development of AIDS was a

threat to the world economy, since the economic growth of some African countries had already slowed as a result of its spread. The strengthening of cooperation between UNAIDS and the private sector with a view to perfecting techniques of prevention, increasing access to treatment and mobilizing resources should therefore be welcomed.

AIDS was also a serious threat to social development. More than ever, account should be taken of the role of women and their contribution to the economic situation of their families in all aspects of the planning and implementation of the AIDS Programme. The European Union welcomed the recent launching of the campaign on "Children in a world of AIDS", which would publicize the increasingly dramatic situation of the millions of children threatened by the epidemic.

The Executive Director of the Programme was right to stress that the various components of the United Nations system would be required to incorporate AIDS-related activities into their operational programmes in order effectively to help countries intensify their action to combat AIDS; the European Union considered action of that kind to be essential, since the United Nations agencies were particularly well placed to create political awareness and raise the necessary funds.

The European Union recommended that the Economic and Social Council should make AIDS the theme of one of its subsequent sessions.

Mr. NEBYENZIA (Russian Federation), referring to the question of multisectoral collaboration on tobacco or health, said that his Government supported the Council's initiative and the efforts of the United Nations system to assist Member States to improve national anti-smoking programmes. The United Nations and its specialized agencies should join efforts to coordinate the fight by working out strategies to prevent pressure from transnational tobacco companies, adopting as soon as possible a framework convention to fight tobacco consumption, giving tobacco issues high priority in political circles and calling on Governments to become involved in action to combat smoking at the national level.

With regard to the coordination of the activities of the United Nations system in the field of energy, he said that the Commission on Sustainable Development should play a central role with the help of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, once the

latter's review had been completed. At its nineteenth special session, the General Assembly had reaffirmed the need to develop a high-level sustainable energy strategy and had asked the Commission on Sustainable Development to prepare such a debate. The result should be a programme of action aimed at solving global and national energy problems.

His Government supported the action to coordinate United Nations activities with reference to the UNAIDS Programme, particularly the establishment of an inter-agency task force to strengthen coordination and better determine responsibilities among co-sponsoring bodies. It supported the recommendation by the Council that AIDS and its social and economic consequences should be the theme of the high-level segment of a future substantive session.

With reference to the proclamation of international years, his Government considered that the initiative of the Kyrgyz Republic concerning the proclamation of the year 2000 as the International Year of Mountains, of Japan concerning the proclamation of the year 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers and of Argentina concerning the proclamation of the year 2000 as the International Year of Thanksgiving deserved full respect. However, in the context of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/227 and the further rationalization of the Council's work, the item should be dropped from the latter's agenda and should be considered directly by the relevant Committees of the General Assembly.

Ms. SWEENEY (United Nations Volunteers Programme) confirmed that the idea of an International Year of Volunteers, as put forward by the representative of Japan, had been appearing for some time on the agendas of various international meetings. Its celebration would certainly be a tribute to the generous work of volunteers and she welcomed the success that the idea had already achieved among a large number of Governments, organizations of the United Nations system and society at large.

The preparation, design and execution of the International Year needed to be firmly decentralized. The informal consultations which had already taken place on the subject confirmed that an International Year of Volunteers would further catalyze the recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteer efforts.

Mr. SFEIR-YOUNIS (World Bank) said that, during the 1997 fiscal year, the World Bank had contributed US$ 3 million to the core budget of UNAIDS and its regional activities. In the field, there was concrete collaboration between the Bank and the Programme or its co-sponsors; in Asia, for example, a joint World Bank/WHO project had been officially incorporated into the UNAIDS Inter-Country Team for Asia and the Pacific. Electronic support services had been introduced, providing access to a wide range of documents and information exchanges. In Africa, an initiative had been included in the work of the Abidjan intercountry team; the Bank also supported research projects in several West African countries. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the World Bank-initiated project was being integrated into the technical support efforts for UNAIDS. Epidemiological studies were being carried out, the economic impact of the epidemic investigated and innovative interventions developed in the private sector.

The Bank was also collaborating with the secretariat of the Programme, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF to produce a series of publications on topics relating to gender and AIDS. In collaboration with the UNAIDS secretariat and the European Union, it was also publishing a book entitled "Aids and Development: The Role of Government". It would continue to work closely with the secretariat of the Programme and the other co-sponsors to publish comprehensive studies on the economic impact of the epidemic and the cost-effectiveness of different activities in future.

Mr. GARCIA MORITAN (Argentina) welcomed the Secretary-General's report summing up multisectoral collaboration on the anti-smoking campaign and WHO's proposal for a framework convention for the purpose. In view of the alarming proportions of the problem of smoking, which was increasingly affecting the developing countries, it was the duty of the international community to set up a global strategy to supplement national activities. The importance of information and prevention among young people could not be stressed enough. The international campaigns to increase awareness of the risks of smoking were having an undeniable effect. The United Nations Focal Point on Tobacco or Health had a crucial role to play in that regard.

With regard to the proclamation of international years, his delegation supported the initiative by Japan that the year 2001 should be proclaimed the International Year of Volunteers. Along with the proposals that the year 2000

should be proclaimed the International Year of Mountains and the International Year for the Culture of Peace, which it also supported, his Government proposed that the year 2000 should be proclaimed the International Year of Thanksgiving. The initiative would contribute to international cooperation by making peoples and Governments aware of the vital importance of gratitude, not only in the private and public life of the individual, but also in relations between countries and cultures throughout the world. Celebrating the International Year would be an occasion for various manifestations and events - the publication of a book on the thanksgiving tradition in different cultures, a pilot programme for the Member States, educational activities, etc. All those activities would be the work of non-governmental organizations and would therefore have no financial implications for the United Nations. His delegation requested Member States to support its proposal.

Mr. CHUNG (Republic of Korea) said that, while he had been interested in the suggestion by the delegation of the Russian Federation that the proclamation of international years should no longer be included in the agenda of the Economic and Social Council, he unreservedly supported the proposal by Japan that the year 2001 should be proclaimed the International Year of Volunteers. The volunteer service played a vital role in cooperation for development and the noble ideal it embodied had lost nothing of its meaning as a new century dawned. His Government supported the United Nations Volunteers Programme and had actively participated in its initiatives by dispatching volunteers to developing countries. To demonstrate its commitment to the Programme, it had doubled its 1996 contribution to the UNV Special Trust Fund and would step up its participation in the activities of the United Nations Volunteers in the years to come.

Mr. LOPEZ (World Health Organization) reminded participants that smoking was an international public health problem; it caused nearly 3 million deaths a year and, unless current trends were reversed, the figure might be expected to rise to 10 million during the next 20 to 30 years. The World Health Assembly had adopted several resolutions calling on Member States and organizations of the United Nations system to implement comprehensive tobacco control strategies. In May 1996, the World Health Assembly had called for the development of an International Framework Convention for Tobacco Control. In addition to a broad statement of its goals, the convention would include

several protocols containing the various segments into which tobacco control could be broken down and which Member States could ratify in accordance with their national requirements. The draft convention would be drawn up in close collaboration with all of WHO's partners and submitted to the World Health Assembly in the year 2000. WHO had already set up a consultative mechanism with the Member States.

With reference to the implementation of World Health Assembly resolution WHA46.8, WHO was encouraged by the intention expressed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to make all United Nations buildings smoke-free by the end of 1997 and was ready to provide support and guidance throughout the system for the implementation of that policy in collaboration with the United Nations Focal Point on Tobacco or Health.

Mr. PURCELL (Food and Agriculture Organization) said that, in addition to the problem of public health, account must be taken of the economic aspects of the smoking issue. World tobacco production since 1993 stood at nearly 6.5 million tonnes; the share of the developing countries had risen from 61 per cent in 1980 to 77 per cent in 1996. The share of consumption in the developing countries was currently 70 per cent and was expected to continue to increase. The cultivation and manufacture of tobacco naturally had an ecological impact because of the deforestation caused.

As part of its commodity programme, FAO maintained a continuing watch on trends in production, demand and trade in tobacco. It had made two studies of trends in the sector to the year 2000 and had held consultations with other agencies to establish other projections to the year 2005 as a guide for tobacco control strategies.

Since May 1976 his organization had not participated in any bilateral or multilateral tobacco aid projects. However, in view of the importance of the tobacco sector in the economies of many countries and the survival of the rural communities concerned, it was endeavouring to help Governments find other possible crops to replace tobacco, by encouraging them to implement diversification programmes.

FAO had taken note of World Health Assembly resolution 49/17 calling for the development of an International Framework Convention for Tobacco Control.

In accordance with World Health Assembly resolution 48.8, it had banned smoking on most of its premises and set up support mechanisms for staff members who wished to give up smoking.

Mr. BOUAH-KAMON (Côte d'Ivoire), explaining the reasons which had led his Government to propose that the year 2000 should be proclaimed the International Year for the Culture of Peace, along with the other themes proposed for that year, said that the choice of the year 2000 was highly symbolic; the start of a millennium was to be marked by the mobilization of national and international public opinion so as to imprint and promote a culture of peace in the minds of men. The idea of the culture of peace was not new to the United Nations, since it had already been on the agenda of the Third Committee for two sessions; the concept was also embodied in UNESCO's Constitution. His own Government had always recommended resorting to dialogue to settle disputes and had hosted an International Congress on "Peace in the Minds of Men" in Yamoussoukro in 1989 under the auspices of UNESCO. The draft resolution to be proposed had been prepared and adopted by the Group of African States and had already received the sponsorship of many Latin American, Asian and European States.

Mr. WINNICK (United States of America) said that he found the report on multisectoral collaboration on tobacco or health extremely instructive. Awareness of the harmful effects of tobacco and the need for deterrents had recently led the United States Government to enact new legislation to regulate the advertising of tobacco products and discourage young people from using them. United Nations bodies should be the first to set an example and his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to ban smoking in United Nations buildings by the end of 1997 and the energetic anti-smoking measures taken in some parts of the system. His Government was in favour of more active campaigns to promote awareness, especially among young people. It supported the principle and methods for drawing up a framework convention for tobacco control.

With regard to the coordination of action to combat AIDS, the establishment of the UNAIDS Programme had already given rise to a number of specific initiatives, including the publication of a pamphlet to promote awareness among peacekeeping personnel. Strengthening the Resident Coordinators' system should help increase the programme's impact in the

context of operational activities and ensure optimal use of the available resources. Generally speaking, all bodies in the United Nations system must pay greater attention to the problems outlined by the Secretary-General in paragraphs 41 to 56 of his report (E/1997/63).

The report on coordination in the field of energy should explicitly mention the link between fossil fuels and the greenhouse gases which contributed to climate change. As to energy prices, it should state that new and renewable sources of energy were becoming increasingly competitive and would thus become gradually more attractive. The elimination of subsidies and market destabilization practices would pave the way for investments to enhance the efficiency of new energy sources. His Government was not in favour of a conference or a high-level meeting on energy since it considered that the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development provided an appropriate context for the energy debate and that the promotion of renewable sources of energy would strengthen international efforts to restrict greenhouse gases in accordance with the Framework Convention on Climate Change. It emphasized the importance of an open investment regime to promote access to energy services and the need for market-based energy policies in order to attract capital to finance energy projects.

Mrs. CALLANGAN (Philippines) said that she supported the draft resolution to proclaim the year 2001 the International Year of Volunteers and invited other delegations to do the same. A number of Filipino volunteers were serving in different regions, especially in Africa, under the United Nations Volunteers Programme. In view of the enormous problems the developing world now faced, the action of foreign volunteers was needed more than ever to complement the efforts of Governments and the international community. Volunteers also had an important contribution to make in their own countries as partners of the national authorities in promoting economic and social well-being.

In the context of the UNAIDS Programme's activities to promote information and global awareness, her Government would host the Fourth International Conference on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific in October 1997.

The Conference, which was co-sponsored by the AIDS Society of Asia and the Pacific and the Ministry of Health of the Philippines, would study all possible forms of partnership with a view to effective programmes for prevention and treatment.

Mr. JONSSON (Iceland) said he was pleased to state that his country had become a member of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development. His country had great potential for increasing the use of renewable hydroelectric and geothermal energy sources; only 10 per cent of the economically feasible production capacity was currently being utilized. His Government would like to see that opportunity exploited, although it was aware of the impact of increased industrial production on the growth of greenhouse gas emissions. It considered that such emissions must be viewed from a global perspective, as the use of traditional energy sources would yield considerably greater emissions than renewable sources of energy.

It was therefore important to draw up new protocols or other legal instruments for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases without obstructing the exploitation of clean and renewable energy sources. It was important to ensure that future obligations under the Framework Convention on Climate Change did not cause a conflict between local and global targets for emissions of greenhouse gases. With regard to the very important role of volunteers in his country, particularly in the provision of disaster relief, his delegation supported the proposal by Japan that the year 2001 should be proclaimed the International Year of Volunteers.

Mr. MOUBARAK (Lebanon) said that his delegation was in favour of the proclamation of an International Year of Volunteers. His country had benefited greatly from the activities of the United Nations Volunteers Programme, the aim of which was to mobilize the potential of young people in the service of development. A group of United Nations volunteers was currently taking part in the Lebanese national programme of assisted returns and reintegration of persons displaced by the war. His Government would be prepared to contribute, as far as its means permitted, to the success of the International Year.

Mrs. CASSAM (Observer for UNESCO) said that, following the preparations initiated in 1993, her organization had contributed to the

organization in Harare, in September 1996, of the World Solar Summit, which had had 1,000 participants, many of them high-ranking. The Summit had recognized the importance of renewable energies and had decided to develop the World Solar Programme (1996-2005). An outline of the programme had been submitted, along with the Harare Declaration on Solar Energy and Sustainable Development, at the most recent special session of the General Assembly. The Chairman of the World Solar Commission, Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, and Mr. Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO, were preparing a joint statement which presented the World Solar Programme and would be sent to all Heads of State and Government. A series of donor meetings would be organized to enhance the implementation of the Programme.

Her organization's activities in combating AIDS naturally concentrated on education, health education and school curricula. It was also involved in prevention through information programmes which took cultural contexts into account. In research, it was ready to cooperate with WHO and UNAIDS to organize a task force to promote access to new treatments in developing countries and to coordinate initiatives on vaccines. She nevertheless emphasized two essential points made in the report: the problem of AIDS called for stronger, more systematic and closer coordination and cooperation on the part of the United Nations system, and AIDS prevention must take account of ethical and cultural dimensions, especially in respect of the human rights of women and girls.

The proclamation of the year 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers would show that the United Nations system remained committed to the spirit of international cooperation through the mobilization not only of career staff members, but also of competent people of good will in the service of international solidarity. It would be an opportunity to pay tribute to all the young volunteers in the past 25 years who had given their time and sometimes their lives to the cause of development and peace. UNESCO had recently signed an agreement with the United Nations Volunteers Programme for the creation of a corps of Cultural Heritage Volunteers and intended to contribute actively to the preparation and implementation of the activities to be scheduled if the International Year of Volunteers was proclaimed. As far as the celebrations of the year 2000 were concerned, her organization associated itself fully with the proposals by Argentina and Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. HYNES (Canada) said that NGOs were vital partners in development, since they could often do what the United Nations system and the Governments could not achieve directly; he would therefore encourage all bodies throughout the system to promote cooperation with them. The specific proposals contained in the Secretary-General's note (E/1997/46) warranted close attention. Many of the ideas put forward in the JIU report on coordination of policy and programming frameworks for more effective development cooperation (A/51/636 - E/1996/104) had already been taken into account by the Secretary-General in his first group of reforms and it was to be hoped that the second group would include further measures for better coordination in the field.

The report on tobacco (E/1997/62) gave a comprehensive overview of the activities of the United Nations system in that area. Noting that it was planned to establish a special trust fund to finance certain activities, his delegation, which opposed the proliferation of such funds, wished to know what other delegations thought about it. Where energy was concerned, it supported the proposal that the Commission on Sustainable Development should devote its ninth session to the question of energy and intended to participate in the preparations. It also considered that serious thought should be given to making the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development an integral part of the Commission.

The report on HIV/AIDS was excellent. The European Union's proposal that the Council should consider the question during the high-level segment of a forthcoming session or during the discussion of questions of coordination should be given serious consideration. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the Secretary-General was intending to concentrate more on the AIDS epidemic, but warned against the creation of bureaucratic machinery that was liable to duplicate work.

Lastly, his delegation pointed out that, while the various themes proposed for international years represented noble causes, it should not be forgotten that Governments and public opinion expected the United Nations to show specific results and that it was also facing financial difficulties. His Government would accept the proposals in question only if it received the assurance of the Secretary-General that implementing them would not involve too great an increase in expenditure.

Mr. WIJKMAN (Observer for UNDP) congratulated the Executive Director of UNAIDS on his excellent report, which described comprehensively the severity of the epidemic and the activities of the United Nations system to combat it. The consequences of the epidemic were dramatic for families and for the public and private sectors and thus for development; according to recent data supplied by the United States Government, it would mean that several African countries would experience negative population growth in the next few years. There were reasons to be optimistic, however. The spirit of cooperation within UNAIDS had improved significantly, the respective roles of UNAIDS and the co-sponsors were better defined and progress was being made in cooperation at the local level. However, an expanded response to the epidemic would depend on additional funding. His organization was determined to contribute to the fullest possible extent to the work ahead.

UNDP had recently adopted a new framework for cooperation with the representatives of civil society and was in favour of the proclamation of an International Year of Volunteers in the year 2001. The opening year of the new century would provide a good opportunity to pay tribute to the efforts of those who served as volunteers for development and to promote their fundamental role among the excluded and the vulnerable. It would be an opportunity for every country to reflect on the significance of volunteering in its own society, to develop volunteer activities and to stimulate the sharing of information within and between countries.

Recalling that access to energy was a condition of development, he stressed the need for the development of new technologies which would be financially and environmentally viable and efficient and meet development needs, particularly among the poor. The report on energy that UNDP had prepared for the special session of the General Assembly looked precisely at the role of energy in development. It clearly showed that traditional approaches were inadequate and that new and promising technologies required different legal, institutional and fiscal frameworks. UNDP fully endorsed the report of the Secretary-General and stressed the need to improve coordination within the United Nations system and to reinforce dialogue with the private sector and research institutes.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.